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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR TONY P. HALL'S TRIP TO DARFUR
HIGHLIGHTS ABUSES AND CONTINUED NEEDS

SUMMARY

¶1. Ambassador Tony Hall led a delegation of staff and journalists to Sudan's Darfur states on November 18 through ¶20. The purpose of the visit was to witness first-hand the dire situation and to observe U.N. operations, principally those of the World Food Program (WFP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Through many interviews, meetings and statements with officials and international and local press, Ambassador Hall emphasized the significant contributions of emergency assistance from the American people. (The visit received extensive press coverage.) He visited four camps housing internally displaced persons (IDPs), talking with many of the IDPs themselves. He met with U.N. agency staff and NGO implementers, discussing their humanitarian operations and prospects for safe return of IDPs (and refugees in Chad) to their homes. The delegation visited the recently demolished camp of al-Jeir (by the Government of Sudan) in South Darfur, and flew over nine razed and burned villages in West Darfur.

¶2. The visit, which took place at the time of the U.N. Security Council's meeting in Nairobi, presented a sobering view of a humanitarian crisis that may continue to spiral downward. A lack of security is preventing U.N. agencies and NGOs from fully implementing their mandate to serve the region's most needy. A poor harvest, which FAO estimates to be 15 to 50 percent of past yields, will lead to more farmers requiring food aid, perhaps as soon as March. At that point, WFP is expected to increase its operations from 1.1 to 1.3 million persons fed as it is now to 2.3 million persons per month. Insecurity, more importantly, prevents IDPs from returning to their homes in time for the next planting season in May/June 2005. Another crop failure in 2005 could guarantee the need for several more years of feeding and providing for a growing share of the region's estimated 6 million population. WFP's emergency feeding program (EMOP) for Darfur alone (not including refugees in Chad) is estimated to cost \$361 million for calendar year 2005.

¶3. Sudanese officials whom Amb. Hall met denied any responsibility and pinned the blame on rebels. All said the GOS would honor the commitments contained in the two o protocols on security and humanitarian operations, which were brokered by the African Union. End summary.

Site Visits Day One

¶4. Ambassador Tony Hall, USUN/Rome, visited Khartoum and all three Darfur states during a three-day visit from November 18 20. The Ambassador was accompanied by two staff persons, an agriculture advisor, and four journalists. WP's and FAO's emergency coordinators for Darfur also traveled with the delegation. After a brief stop in Khartoum, the group traveled to al-Fasher, the capital of North Darfur, where it met with U.N. agency representatives, the SAID DART, and NGOs. WFP's head of office in al-Fasher explained that more than one-third of North Darfur's 1.6 million persons have become displaced as a result of the conflict. One-third of the schools are closed, six of eleven hospitals have been destroyed, and one-third of the 69 pharmacies have been wiped out. The state has suffered from drought continually over the past four years, which has adversely affected livestock and crops.

¶5. A lack of a secure environment has hampered humanitarian operations. The WFP representative explained

that only recently were major roads leading into and out of al-Fasher declared safe by the GOS. This allowed humanitarian operations to start in previously unserved areas. For example, in Kutum, a town northwest of al-Fasher, humanitarian workers witnessed more than 100,000 IDPs, most of whom were taking shelter under trees. The environment is in constant flux with towns and IDP camps being classified "permissive" or "non-permissive" on a daily basis. (Note: This was proved again 72 hours after the delegation left, when further attacks closed all of North Darfur outside of al-Fasher to UN and NGO personnel. End note.)

16. WFP and implementing partners were preparing to make food deliveries for Malha, a town northeast of al-Fasher and under government control, which would have marked the first distribution of food in eight weeks. Trucks left on November 20th on their way to Malha while the delegation was in West Darfur, but they were turned back because of skirmishes between government and rebel forces. In the north alone, WFP estimates that it is not reaching more than 100,000 targeted persons.

17. Ambassador Hall visited two IDP camps, abu-Shouk and Zam Zam. Abu-Shouk, the larger of the two with a population estimated at greater than 40,000, is a well-run camp. One of the humanitarian workers who met Ambassador Hall referred to it as "the Hilton of camps" because of food availability, good organization, and extensive services, including supplementary and therapeutic feeding units, health care services, etc. Supplementary feeding targets the most vulnerable, mainly pregnant and lactating mothers, and children under five, and is reaching an estimated 2,000 persons a week. IRC runs five health clinics in and around al-Fasher, including a health clinic within abu-Shouk. It employs local doctors who in addition to working at IRC clinics must continue to provide services at state health clinics or hospitals. Since many of the hospitals and clinics suffered damage, some of the doctors are working exclusively at IRC clinics, whose services are open to IDPs and the general population alike. (Note: IRC said the EU is rebuilding several of the damaged clinics and hospitals.)

18. In contrast to abu-Shouk, the Zam Zam camp is less organized and grew out of a spontaneous gathering of IDPs. It is smaller in size perhaps 15,000 persons and lacks some of the services of abu-Shouk. It is less sanitary as well, with livestock living among the human population.

19. The Ambassador spoke with women who had been abused and raped by Jenjaweed forces and GOS police. Some were afraid to speak, fearing retaliation. (It is widely reported that GOS security personnel frequently roam the camps to collect information and to intimidate victims from reporting any crimes against them. Several alleged security persons were pointed out to the delegation.)

10. The first day ended with the Ambassador's courtesy call on the governor (Wali), Osman Kober. The governor started off with a relaxed discussion of the need to broaden beneficiaries of WFP feeding programs to include people affected by the drought. As he went on, he became noticeably upset while bringing up the labeling of the problems in Darfur as genocide by the USG. At that point he blamed the rebels for everything from armed fighting to the drought. (WFP's country director Ramiro da Silvo had briefed Ambassador Hall back in October on what the governor would likely say. Kober followed it as if he were reading from a script.) He concluded by saying it is not a fight among ethnic groups or tribes, it is conflict over limited resources, including land.

South and West Darfur

11. On the second day in Nyala, South Darfur's capital, the OCHA representative chaired a session with U.N. agencies and NGOs. The meeting lacked energy, as most attendees declined to speak. (This was likely due to two factors: the presence of international journalists and exhaustion.) He explained that humanitarian operations got into full swing only in August, when staffing among all agencies and NGOs reached minimally acceptable levels. However, this was soon followed by a steadily worsening security situation, which limits the reach of humanitarian groups. In the last 30 days, approximately 80,000 persons from Jabel Marreh (the fertile mountains and hills where the three Darfur states converge) have become displaced. With an ever-increasing population of IDPs, the system set up to provide marginal support is becoming overstressed. The GOS insists that people are returning to their homes, often citing the figure 77,000, but no outside group has been able to corroborate that number. Instead there is

widespread fear and mistrust of the government by the communities.

¶12. To make matters worse, the OCHA representative briefly discussed a potentially explosive issue over property rights an issue the Ambassador later raised with the Sudanese State Secretary for Humanitarian Affairs (see para. 18, below). According to a 1982 land law, any land left idle for one year or more can legally be taken over by squatters. OCHA and other U.N. agency representatives speculated that perhaps there was a more sinister purpose to keeping people off their lands: comprehensive land redistribution. For many IDPs, the one-year mark will be reached in April 2005.

¶13. At Kalma, just south of Nyala, the camp is a massive sprawl stretching for seven kilometers, and resembling a small (and very poor) city. WFP estimates the rolls at more than 113,000 persons, a number which on average is growing by 1,000 a day. The delegation witnessed "ghost settlements" within the camp, which are essentially shells of shelter used only when food distributions take place. The real number of "full-time" residents is estimated around 70,000. One of the nurses told horrific accounts of women brutalized and raped by Jenjaweed. She recounted the story of one woman brought to the clinic who had been gang-raped by eight men. One pregnant woman, who left camp in search of firewood, was not only raped but at the end of the ordeal had a stick inserted in her, which caused an abortion. This was the most gruesome of the stories the delegation heard. Whether or not the discussions were monitored by government authorities it is not certain. Perhaps it was coincidence, but shortly after the visit the GOS issued a decree preventing residents of Kalma from gathering firewood. (Firewood is the only cooking fuel.)

¶14. By helicopter the delegation flew into Zalingei in West Darfur to observe the first food distribution in seven weeks. Despite this the CARE-run program was well organized and orderly. Women and children waited patiently in long lines while local CARE staff measured out rations. Signs were posted everywhere in Arabic and English. (The English version of the "exit" sign read "Exist" an appropriate imperative.) No one was visibly angry over having missed rations for the previous month; they were just thankful for the food they got that day and for the help from the U.S. When some of the women heard that the delegation was from the United States, they were extremely grateful and thanked the Ambassador often.

Meeting with Humanitarian Affairs Minister

¶15. Back in Khartoum at the end of the visit, the Ambassador gave a blunt account of what he witnessed to State Minister for Humanitarian Affairs, Mohamed Yousif. The Ambassador used the meeting to raise four issues: 1) local taxes being assessed on WFP's locally procured food; 2) GOS cancellation of FAO/WFP joint crop assessment; 3) access from Chad or Libya for food distribution; and 4) the 1982 land tenure law. After blaming the international community for the problems in Sudan, the State Minister briefly addressed each of the Ambassador's issues. On local taxation of food, he explained that a reimbursement system is in place; WFP simply has to apply for any taxes it has paid.

¶16. Earlier in the year, a joint FAO-WFP team concluded a food and crop assessment of southern Sudan. At the end of November the team was going to conduct an assessment of northern Sudan, which includes Darfur. Earlier, we had been told by FAO that the assessment was canceled. Yousif clarified the GOS position: they had not canceled the assessment but were negotiating with FAO-WFP the process through which the study would be reviewed. The GOS is arguing for government clearance through the Ministry of Agriculture before the report is released. He said he saw no reason for the assessment to be canceled.

¶17. On using an overland corridor from Chad or Libya into Darfur, Yousif said the GOS would not allow unlimited or unencumbered access of food into Darfur, but might allow shipments on a case-by-case basis. This issue, he said, would be raised with the foreign ministry. He also mentioned that their decision would be influenced by economic factors, a reference to the cheaper route from Port Sudan and desire for the business to stay within Sudan.

¶18. On the land tenure law of 1982, Yousif sought to allay everyone's fears by stating the law does not apply to Darfur. The intent of the law was meant to prevent fertile agriculture land from being kept idle. In Darfur, the situation is different. He said in Abuja the agreement was

people would be allowed to return to their land the GOS will honor that commitment.

¶19. Following a meeting with representatives of the U.N. country team, Ambassador Hall held a press conference in Khartoum (the first since the end of Ramadan). His trip and statement generated considerable coverage, ranging from local Sudanese papers to Middle East Broadcasting (MBC) and Knight Ridder newspapers throughout the U.S.

Observations

¶20. Insecurity is the overriding issue. The people will not, nor should they, return to their homes without some reasonable assurance of safety. That assurance does not now exist, and it is not likely to come in the near term. Keeping people in camps jeopardizes next year's harvest, which will worsen the livelihoods of people in Darfur and add even more people to the dole. Trust in government is necessary, but what is also needed in the short term are ways of resurrecting traditional means of resolving tribal conflict. One Sheikh from the Arab Zayy!diyah tribe of North Darfur told us of Qadhdhai's Tripoli initiative of bringing tribal leaders together to begin a dialog of reconciliation. The delegation discussed this initiative with the U.S. Mission in Tripoli.

¶21. Humanitarian agencies seem to be understaffed. (####)

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the NGOs is that the staff was often not familiar with complex humanitarian emergencies involving conflict. This may contribute to exaggerated numbers of registered IDPs.

¶22. Apparitions appear in camps just in time for food distributions. Registered beneficiaries far exceed actual camp residents -- WFP estimates as much as 30 percent. There is little doubt that even those who do not live in camps are in great need of food, but they are likely less at risk than those who have been displaced (in camps or otherwise). Now that the infrastructure is in place for feeding people, more attention needs to be given to proper registration.

¶23. Insecurity causes unpredictable gaps in food deliveries. Some 300,000 or more people are not being fed because they are not safely reachable. Airdrops may be one means of assuring delivery.

Ambassador's Comments

¶24. The suffering of the people of Darfur is overwhelming. I listened to stories of women raped, men beaten, tortured, and murdered, villages burned, and saw people barely hanging on to life. Insecurity prevents us from reaching more than 300,000 persons who somehow continue to survive. It also means that continual and reliable food distribution is not assured from week to week. If the displaced are unable to return home shortly, another, more serious crop failure looms. The situation is desperate, but based on what I saw and heard it will likely get worse.

¶25. On a less pessimistic note, the thousands of people we saw in camps seemed to be hopeful and thankful for the hundreds of million dollars in U.S. emergency assistance. Attendance at press conferences and general media interest were high. Using what we saw and learned, my Mission's priority in the coming months will be to keep Darfur at the top of the list of donor countries in Rome. With the UN consolidated appeal (work plan) for all Sudan reaching \$1.5 billion for the coming year, donors must be prepared to make early and very generous contributions.

¶26. The commitment and personal sacrifice of the thousand or more humanitarian workers is astounding. The USAID DART, WFP, and FAO have all posted excellent teams who persevere in extreme conditions. My gratitude and prayers go out to them.

¶27. Minimize considered. HALL